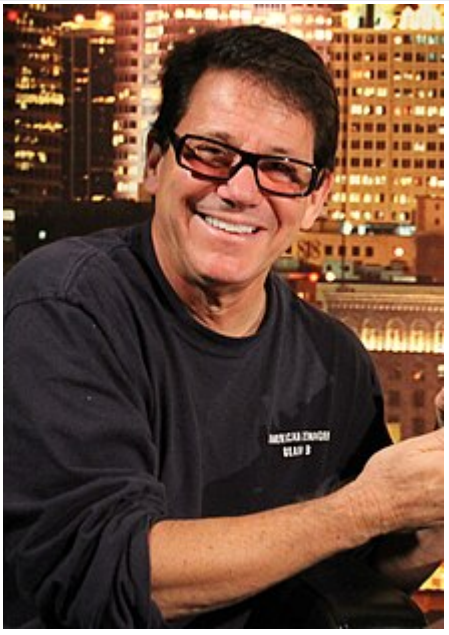
Anson Williams

Anson Williams (born **Anson William Heimlich**;[1] September 25, 1949) is an American actor and director, best known for his role as gullible, well-intentioned singer Warren "Potsie" Weber on the television series *Happy Days* (1974–1984), a role for which he was nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor – Series, Miniseries or Television Film.

Williams has since become a prominent television director, working on programs such as *Melrose Place* (1992–1999), *Beverly Hills, 90210* (1990–2000), *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996–2003), *Lizzie McGuire* (2001–2004), and *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* (2008–2013).

Anson Williams	
 Williams in 2011	
Born	Anson William Heimlich September 25, 1949 Los Angeles, California, U.S.
Education	Burbank High School
Occupations	Actor · director
Years active	1971–present
Known for	Happy Days · The Secret Life of the American Teenager · Sabrina the Teenage Witch · Melrose Place · Beverly Hills, 90210
Spouses	Lorrie Mahaffey (m. 1978; div. 1986) Jackie Gerken (m. 1988; div. 2019) Sharon MaHarry (m. 2023)

Early life

Williams was born Anson William Heimlich[2] to a Jewish family.[3] His father, Haskell Heimlich, legally changed the spelling of the family name to "Heimlick", unlike Williams's father's cousin,[4] Dr. Henry Heimlich, namesake of the Heimlich maneuver for treating choking victims.[2] Williams attended Burbank High School, where he was captain of the track team and acted in multiple school productions.

Career

In 1971, Williams appeared in the Sherman Brothers' original musical, *Victory Canteen*, at the Ivar Theater in Los Angeles. That year he also appeared with John Amos in a commercial for McDonald's.

In 1972, Williams portrayed Potsie Weber in a segment of the comedy-anthology series *Love, American Style* titled "Love and the Happy Days", which also introduced Richie Cunningham (Ron Howard), Richie's mother Marion (Marion Ross), and other characters who were spun off into the television series *Happy Days*. (Only Williams, Howard, and Ross reprised their roles).[5][6] The new series' first season, during which Williams received second billing after Howard, was centered mainly on Richie and Potsie. Eventually, as breakout character Arthur "Fonzie"

Fonzarelli (Henry Winkler) and Richie's mother, father, and sister became more popular, Potsie was joined by Ralph Malph (Don Most, who was merely a side character in season one), and Potsie and Ralph became inseparable.

Williams as Potsie Weber in 1974

Unlike Howard and Most, Williams was one of the few to remain through the entire run of the series, although his appearances became less frequent in later seasons. In some episodes, Richie, Potsie, and Ralph formed a band combo that performed at Arnold's Drive-In and other places. As Potsie, Williams actually sang lead vocals for the group. Williams's first wife, Lorrie Mahaffey, portrayed Potsie's girlfriend, Jennifer, in later seasons.

In 1977, during his run on "Happy Days" Williams recorded and released a single, "Deeply" which peaked at #93 on the Hot 100.[7]

After *Happy Days*, Williams began a much more prolific career as a television director, starting with short programs for adolescent-age children, including afterschool specials "No Greater Gift" (1985) and "The Drug Knot" (1986), and TV-movie *Lone Star Kid* (1986).[8] He has gone on to direct many episodes for a variety of television series, including *The Pretender*, *Beverly Hills, 90210*, *Melrose Place*, *seaQuest 2032*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and *Charmed*.[9] He also directed several episodes of the TV series *7th Heaven*.

Despite his success as a director and producer, Williams has occasionally returned to his work on *Happy Days* in retrospective ways. He played himself in a 1996 *Happy Days*-themed *Boy Meets World* episode (which also featured former castmates Tom Bosley and Pat Morita).[10] While directing a 2003 episode of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* titled "Sabrina in Wonderland", he appeared as Potsie in a fantasy sequence. He also joined his fellow *Happy Days* cast members for two reunion specials: *The Happy Days Reunion Special* (1992) and *Happy Days: 30th Anniversary Reunion* (2005).

Williams initially objected to footage of Potsie appearing in Weezer's 1994 music video Buddy Holly, which was set in Arnold's Drive-In from *Happy Days*, but he later relented.[11]

Williams is also a businessman. In 1987, he and fellow *Happy Days* cast member Al Molinaro opened a chain of diners called Big Al's; however the business lasted only a short time.[12] He founded Starmaker Products, a cosmetics company, and was a featured speaker at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's National Trademark Expo in April 2008, where he discussed the importance of registered trademarks for small businesses and signed autographs for *Happy Days* fans. Williams is the author of *Singing to a Bulldog: From Happy Days to Hollywood Director, and the Unlikely Mentor Who Got Me There*.[13]

As of July 2023, Williams and his wife, memoirist Sharon MaHarry, who had married in May, were collaborating on a one woman stage play based on her book, *Crazy Mama: A Memoir of Love and Madness*, which depicts a character growing up with a mother who has struggled with mental illness, which won the 2014 Southwest Writers Competition and Santa Barbara Writers Conference Fiction Award.[14]

Personal life

Williams had been married to Jackie Gerkin. He filed for divorce in 2019, but later filed a motion to have that previous filing dismissed in October of that year. He then filed again in 2020.[14]

Around 2010, Williams met memoirist and real estate broker Sharon MaHarry, when she sold him his house in Ojai, California. Williams also helped her regain the ability to walk as she recovered from a serious back injury, and as she mourned the loss of her husband of 35 years to cancer. They subsequently began a relationship, which Williams characterized by saying, "the first few months of the relationship was healing." MaHarry commented that the relationship "first healed a body then a heart." They eventually moved into a home in Ojai, California. On May 6, 2023, the couple married in their backyard in what they called a "very untraditional" ceremony. Williams' *Happy Days* co-star Donny Most served as best man. Commenting on getting married at age 73, Williams said, "At this age, to be able to find that kind of full connection for the first time, and what that means — it's a miracle. I would trade my stardom, notoriety, all that bologna for Sharon in a minute. There's no age limit on being loved. There's no age limit on living life fully."[14][15]

Politics

On July 7, 2022, Williams announced that he would be running for mayor of Ojai, California.[16] He lost to incumbent mayor Betsey Stix by 42 votes, with Williams receiving 1,781 votes to Stix's 1,823.[17]

Legal issues

On April 19, 2011, Williams and four of his *Happy Days* co-stars, Erin Moran, Don Most, Marion Ross, and the estate of Tom Bosley, who died in 2010, filed a $10 million breach-of-contract lawsuit against CBS, which owns the show, claiming they had not been paid for merchandising revenues owed under their contracts. The cast members claimed they had not received revenues from show-related items, including comic books, T-shirts, scrapbooks, trading cards, games, lunch boxes, dolls, toy cars, magnets, greeting cards, and DVDs, where their images appeared on the box covers. Under their contracts, they were supposed to be paid 5% from the net proceeds of merchandising if their sole images were used, and half that amount if they were in a group. CBS said it owed the actors $8,500 and $9,000 each, most of it from slot machine revenues, but the group said they were owed millions. The lawsuit was initiated after Ross was informed by a friend playing slots at a casino of a *Happy Days* machine on which players win the jackpot when five Marion Rosses are rolled.[18]

In October 2011, a judge rejected the group's fraud claim.[19] On June 5, 2012, a judge denied a motion filed by CBS to have the case thrown out, which meant it would go to trial on July 17 if the parties did not reach a settlement by then.[20] In July 2012, the actors settled their lawsuit with CBS. Each received a payment of $65,000 and a promise by CBS to continue honoring the terms of their contracts. Williams said, "I'm very satisfied with the settlement. And that's all I can say."[21][22]

Filmography

Actor

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1971	*Owen Marshall, Counselor at Law*	Steve Baggot	Episode: "Eulogy for a Wide Receiver"
1972	*Love, American Style*	Potsie Weber	Episode: "Love and the Happy Days" (pilot for *Happy Days*)
1972	*The Paul Lynde Show*	Jimmy	Episode: "Whiz Kid Sizzles as Quiz Fizzles"
1973	*Bridget Loves Bernie*	Young Man	Episode: "Life Begins at 65"
1973	*Marcus Welby, M.D.*		Episode: "The Panic Path"
1973	*Lisa, Bright and Dark*	Brian Morris	TV movie
1974–1984	*Happy Days*	Potsie Weber	Main cast (219 episodes)
1976	*Laverne & Shirley*	Potsie Weber	Episode: "Excuse Me, May I Cut In?"
1977	*The Love Boat*	Sean McGlynn	Episode: "The Old Man and the Runaway/The Painters/A Fine Romance"
1978	*The Hanna-Barbera Happy Hour*	Himself (Guest Star)	Episode #1.2
1978	*Greatest Heroes of the Bible*	Nabar	Episode: "The Ten Commandments"
1983	*Fantasy Island*	Dan O'Dwyer	Episode: "The Songwriter/Queen of the Soaps"
1984	*I Married a Centerfold*	Nick Bellows	TV movie
1992	*The Happy Days Reunion Special*	Himself	TV special
1995	*Fudge*	Waiter	Episode: "No Exit"
1996	*Boy Meets World*	Himself	Episode: "I Was a Teenage Spy"
2000	*Baywatch*	Councilman McKenna	Episodes: "Soul Survivor", "Dream Girl"
2002	*Son of the Beach*	Warden Jack Beatty	Episode: "Jailhouse Notch: Part 2"
2003	*Sabrina the Teenage Witch*	Potsie Weber	Episode: "Sabrina in Wonderland"
2005	*Happy Days: 30th Anniversary Reunion*	Himself	TV special
2016	*The Odd Couple*	Clayton	Episode: "Taffy Days"

Director

Year	Title	Notes
1985	*ABC Afterschool Special*	Episode: "No Greater Gift"
1986	*WonderWorks*	Episode: "Lone Star Kid"
1986	*CBS Schoolbreak Special*	Episode: "The Drug Knot"
1987	*L.A. Law*	Episode: "Brackman Vasektimized"
1987–1988	*Hooperman*	Episodes: "Baby Talk", "Blaste from the Past", "In Search of Bijoux"
1988	*Just the Ten of Us*	Episode: "The Merry Mix-Up"
1989	*Your Mother Wears Combat Boots*	TV movie
1989	*Dream Date*	TV movie
1989	*Little White Lies*	TV movie
1990	*Glory Days*	Episodes: "Blastin' Away the Blues", "Tammy Tell Me True"
1990	*A Quiet Little Neighborhood, a Perfect Little Murder*	TV movie
1991	*All-American Murder*	Direct-to-video
1993–1994	*Diagnosis: Murder*	4 episodes
1994	*Heaven Help Us*	Episode: "The Wall"
1994–1995	*Robin's Hoods*	Episodes: "To Heir is Human", "Deja Vu"
1995	*Live Shot*	4 episodes
1995	*Fudge*	7 episodes
1995–1996	*seaQuest 2032*	7 episodes
1996	*The Cape*	Episodes: "The Need to Know", "Reggie's Wild Ride"
1996	*Xena: Warrior Princess*	Episode: "Remember Nothing"
1996	*Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*	Episodes: "King for a Day", "Mummy Dearest"
1996–1999	*Melrose Place*	9 episodes
1996–2000	*Beverly Hills, 90210*	9 episodes
1997	*The Pretender*	Episode: "The Better Part of Valor"
1997	*Clueless*	Episode: "Sharing Cher"
1997–1998	*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*	Episodes: "Statistical Probabilities", "It's Only a Paper Moon"
1997–1999	*Star Trek: Voyager*	4 episodes
1998	*Love Boat: The Next Wave*	Episodes: "How Long Has Thing Been Going On?", "Reunion"
1998–	*7th Heaven*	Episodes: "Cutters", "Come Drive with Me"

1999		
1999	*Cousin Skeeter*	Episodes: "The Not-So-Great Outdoors", "The Volcano"
1999	*The Net*	Episode: "Chem Club"
1999–2000	*Profiler*	Episodes: "Infidelity", "Mea Culpa"
1999–2003	*Sabrina the Teenage Witch*	10 episodes
2000–2001	*Baywatch*	6 episodes
2000–2001	*Charmed*	Episodes: "Awakened", "All Halliwell's Eve", "The Demon Who Came in from the Cold"
2001	*Titans*	Episode: "She Stoops to Conquer"
2001–2002	*The Nightmare Room*	Episodes: "Scareful What You Wish For", "My Name is Evil"
2001–2003	*Lizzie McGuire*	7 episodes
2002	*Body & Soul*	Episode: "Running Home"
2006	*Sons & Daughters*	Episode: "Surprise Party"
2008–2013	*The Secret Life of the American Teenager*	31 episodes

Awards and nominations

Year	Association	Category	Nominated work	Result
1983	Golden Globe Award	Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor - Series, Miniseries or Television Film	Warren "Potsie" Weber in Happy Days	Nominated

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External links

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